

PBS MACNEIL/LEHRER NEWSHOUR
27 September 1984

STAT

LEBANON/U.S. EMBASSY ATTACK MACNEIL: The bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut last week, with 14 dead and some 90 wounded, erupted overnight into a big partisan political issue. Congressional Democrats were infuriated by President Reagan's remarks yesterday at Bowling Green, Ohio, answering a student's question about embassy security. According to an Associated Press transcript, he said, 'The real protection and where we're feeling the effects today of the near destruction of our intelligence capability in recent years, before we came here, the effort that somehow to say, "Well, spying is somehow dishonest, and let's get rid of our intelligence agents," and we did that to a large extent. Your biggest protection is to... And we're trying to rebuild our intelligence to where you'll find out and know in advance what the target time might be and be prepared for it.' Interpreting this as an effort to shift the blame for the bombing to the Carter administration, Democrats reacted in outrage. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told the Senate, 'I believe an apology is order. If one is not forthcoming, a motion of censure is in order.' Later, he elaborated.

SEN.\DANIEL\MOYNIHAN (D-N.Y.): The, what the president said yesterday was wrong, as a matter of fact, and I think he was wrong to say it. There, there are no party politics to opposing terrorists who are out to kill Americans abroad or at home. I would ask the administration in, without rancor, has there been a single request for funds to manage antiterrorist campaigns that has been refused? Has there been one? There has been none. We share their views. Now, why bring this into a political, ah, campaign?

MACNEIL: Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont, a member of the Intelligence Committee, called the president's comment 'outrageous and beneath the dignity of the office of president of the United States.' Leahy added, 'How dare he try to escape his responsibilities? If he does not immediately retract his statement, we should rise up and say, "For shame, Mr. President, for shame. You shame your office." At the White House today, the president said the media had distorted his remarks. Vice President Bush, speaking in Saginaw, Mich., went out of his way to explain that Mr. Reagan was not trying to imply that the Carter administration was responsible for the bombing.

VICE\PRESIDENT\GEORGE\BUSH: Well, I think what he was talking about is the reduction in the so-called DDO, the operations side of the intelligence business, where we came in. And when, when I went out as director, the new administration came in, and the whole idea was, well, there's something wrong with the clandestine service. There's something wrong with doing the clandestine work that needs to be done to get the most intelligence. Ah,